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ABSTRACT

Newspaper media provide one way to motivate students' parents to be in tune with the whys, the hows, the wherefores, and the importance of reading. For example, in the Phoenixville Area School District (Pennsylvania), the reading department writes a monthly column for parents in the local newspaper. The column's topics are based on data gathered from parent surveys, parent advisory meetings, and reading department staff meetings. A crossword puzzle for children is always included. The reading department also uses "Make and Take" workshops. These involve parents coming to school and making reading games to take home to use with their children. In addition, parents are invited to come into the elementary schools during 1 week of the year for the "Parents as Reading Partners" program. At this time, parents read a story or a book to a class. This activity impresses upon the children the importance of reading. Still another project is the "Book Swap 'n Shop," in which children bring used books to school to be exchanged for other books. By working with and reaching parents, the schools have been able to reach more children and to improve children's reading test scores. (HOD)

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READING FOR SALE!

Why do we have to sell reading? Because it's a hot commodity and we don't want consumers to pass it by. I'm a firm believer in the value of the Basal readers and in their steps of sequential learning, but I feel we need much more.

Motivation takes a ride in the classroom when a child asks a question during the basal lesson. This question promotes discussion and the discussion leads to an exploration of an idea. In that instant you may be going off on a slight tangent but it may still be related to the topic of interest in the basal lesson. This, then, becomes the teachable moment where you and the children investigate, read, and discover new areas of learning. This procedure may be termed a unit, a report, or a project which involves research books, written reports, pictures, drawings and three dimensional displays. It may also involve sharing these findings with other classes.

But what else can we do to motivate children to read and write? We have to include writing because the communication process involves someone taking the time to write so that others may read what's been written. Also, we are bound by a compelling instinct to respond to that which has been read and we may do so in oral or written form.

One way of motivating children toward this end is to think of motivating the parents and to help them to be in tune with the whys, the hows, the wherefores, and the importance of reading. A significant means of motivating parents is through the newspaper media. In the Phoenixville Area School District, the ECIA Chapter I reading department has been doing a monthly

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column for parents in our local newspaper, The Evening Phoenix, during the past four years. The column is entitled, "Reading Remedies" and deals with topics relevant to the interests of parents.

The "Reading Remedies" column is not haphazardly done. It is extremely well organized. In order to secure pertinent data of interest to parents, the Chapter I reading department utilizes parent surveys, input from Parent Advisory Council meetings, and finally reading department staff meetings. At this point, the project director and two of the reading specialists meet as a team to discuss appropriate topics for each month. A twelve month format is developed and the team researches information. The two reading specialists, Mrs. Lucia McLaughlin and Mrs. Christine Menzel, are then responsible for writing the articles. A crossword puzzle for the children is always included. The project director edits each article and gives final approval for submission to the newspaper.

Salient points to consider when trying to reach parents in the newspaper media are to keep your messages short and to the point, avoid reading specialist jargon so that parents can readily understand, and use an approach which proves to be one of helpful suggestions. The "Reading Remedies" column has proven to be extremely successful according to feedback from parents and teachers in the community. The Chapter I reading department is extremely grateful to the editor of the newspaper for having the foresight to approve and encourage such a project so that we may reach out to parents and other community members.

Another method of reaching parents and selling reading is by having regularly scheduled "Make and Take" workshops. This involves parents coming to school and making reading games to take home and use with their children. Completed games made by the parents are laminated for durability. Workshop sessions are from 9:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. and parents can come at any time during this period. Also, when parents come to these workshops they are

given reading pamphlets (created by the project director) to take home with them. Some of the topics include: Choosing a Child's Book, Building Study Habits, Using the Newspaper, Homework-the Parent's Role, and Summer Reading. This contributes another motivational technique.

The attendance at these "Make and Take" workshops tell us that parents are interested in helping their children to read and that they take the time and make the effort to do something about it.

Another means of selling reading is our "Parents as Reading Partners" program. We invite parents to come into our elementary schools (all seven of them) during one week of the year. At this time, they read a story or a book to a class. This, too, is extremely well organized so that everything runs smoothly. The typical procedure is as follows:

1. Parents are contacted to volunteer.
2. Teachers are contacted for appropriate times to have parents read in their classrooms.
3. Teacher times and parents are coordinated.
4. Chapter I reading department assists in selection of books when necessary.
5. Master schedule is devised.
6. Schedules are distributed to principals, secretaries, and teachers in each building.
7. Summary sheet is filled out by parents. (Name of book, author, parent's name, teacher's name, grade level, brief summary of book)
8. List of books read are compiled and distributed to the Parent Advisory Council and to all parents.

Now, what are the results of a program such as this? Children see that parents think enough about reading or that they regard reading as important - important enough to come in and read to a class. So you can see thay if we

reach parents, we can and will and do reach children.

One positive outcome was when a parent read Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein to a fifth grade class. Those who have read this book are familiar with how one can get caught up in the meter, the rhyme, the humor and the relevant topics that children know so well. Needless to say, the children loved it and so did the teacher. The teacher then purchased the sequel to this book, A Light in the Attic. She read these poems to the children and had them respond to the readings. The result was a clever interpretation done by the children involving re-reading, writing, and imaginative drawings. So we have here initial motivation, reading, re-reading, responding, and writing. No matter how you look at it, it is the PCRP (Pennsylvania Comprehensive Reading Plan) in use. In connection with poetry, Robert Frost could not have said it any better when he said that poetry begins with a lump in the throat. The joy of it is to discover that we know what we didn't know we knew. It begins in delight and ends in wisdom.

As a follow-up of this activity, a member of the Parent Advisory Council (Mrs. Andrea Freeman) took pictures of parents reading to the children. Thirteen pictures were selected for the annual Chapter I calendar. One parent was selected for the cover and a parent was featured for each of the twelve calendar months. Beside the picture was the name of the teacher, the grade level, the school, the parent's name, the name of the book read by the parent, the author, and a brief summary of the book. Consequently, when calendars were distributed in the fall of the new school year parents would also receive a list of twelve books recommended and tested in the classrooms that may be read to children.

The following year the calendar theme was "Children Reading to Children" and the same procedure was employed. Older children who read to younger

children wrote the book summaries.

For this school year the Parent Advisory Council decided to feature senior citizens and grandparents as VIP's (Very Important Persons) reading in the classrooms. The project director made several trips to the local senior citizen center and spoke to different groups explaining the project, demonstrating how to read a book to children, and telling them that children could benefit greatly from their talent, wisdom, and expertise. Twenty selected books were left at the center for their perusal. Once again the calendar format for 1983-1984 will be essentially the same. The only difference will be that the children will respond to the reading by writing a summary.

Principals, teachers, and students warmly received these special story-tellers in the classroom. The Parents as Reading Partners program shows children that books are written to be read and enjoyed and that books are important to people of all ages.

We are definitely committed to and encourage reading aloud because it develops perception, it stimulates creativity and increases the imagination. Also, since the art of listening is an acquired one, it helps to increase listening and attention spans.

Another project which sells reading is our annual "Book Swap 'n Shop." It involves children bringing in used books in good condition, which they have read, and exchanging them for other books. This is a motivational device which keeps good books in circulation, provides more reading for children and there is no cost involved! The Book Swap takes place during one week of the school year in several schools at the same time. Here, too, success depends on good organizational procedures.

Both the PARP (Parents as Reading Partners) and the Book Swap 'n Shop were published in the International Reading Association's "Newsletter for

Administrators" in the fall of 1981. As a result, we have heard from 85 people all over the United States, Canada, British West Indies, and South America. Respondents were reading specialists, teachers, administrators, and presidents of parent-teacher organizations. Copies of the project director's organizational methods were sent to all who requested them, charging them only for postage and mailing.

Still another method in selling reading is a simulated RIF project. New RIF programs are no longer federally funded but that shouldn't stop you. You can use the same techniques involving a whole school and seek the financial help of your PTA or Home and School Association. This project, too, involves organization and commitment.

One aspect of selling reading which is not used frequently is that of creative dramatics. This totally involves the children and motivates their creative instincts. Sound effects stories are particularly successful with children. For example, a Halloween story may have a witch (hee hee), an owl (whoo whoo), a cat (meow meow), the wind (who-oooo), and a little girl (eek), in the plot. The teacher reads the story and each time she mentions a character, the class echoes the sound effect for that character. This activity fosters listening, attention and responding on cue.

Activities of this type stimulate and encourage children to write creatively and Dr. Donald Durrell says that, writing is active; it involves the child; and doing is important. We also know that writing contributes to reading because writing is the making of reading.

In conclusion, all of the various methods of selling reading do yield big dividends. In working with and in reaching parents, you are able to reach more children. Academically speaking, all of these projects have been in effect over the past four years and during that time reading test scores have significantly improved.